

Annual • Report

ON THE HEALTH


Of the Haltwhistle Rural District

BY THE

. . Medical Officer of Health . .

1906.

Printed by R. T. Mansfield, Main Street, Haltwhistle.



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To the Chairman and Members of the HALTWHISTLE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour as your Medical Officer of presenting my Annual Report on the health of the district for the year 1906.

As in the past I shall adhere to the division of the district into five sub-areas as follows: No. 1—Haltwhistle, comprising the township of Haltwhistle, which, although in a Rural District is really an Urban Area; No. 2—Melkridge and Henshaw consist of a population partly mining and partly agricultural; No. 3—Blenkinsopp and Thirlwall, similar to No. 2; No. 4—Lambley and Hartleyburn at one time partly mining but now almost entirely an Agricultural district; No. 5—All the remaining townships (10 in number) and entirely agricultural. The following table gives the acreage, population and vital statistics of each sub-division as computed by me, for the year just ended. The total area of the whole district is 96,333 acres, and the population which has been gradually on the increase since the last census in 1901, when it was returned at 8,500, may now be fairly estimated at 9,215. This calculation is based partly on the annual increase known to have taken place between the census of 1891 and that of 1901, and also on the excess of births over deaths in the district during the year. It is also to some extent verified by the number of new houses built and occupied during the same period. The density of the population per acre is equal to .09 persons.

Sub-Districts.	Area or Acres.	Population.	Inhabited Houses	Births.			Deaths.			Deaths under 1 yr.		Infectious diseases notified.	
				Number		Rate per 1000 living	Number		Rate per 1000 living	Number.	Rate per 1000 d'ths	Number.	Rate per 1000 living
				M.	F.		M.	F.					
No I.	3134	3600	745	74	57	86.3	37	29	18.8	17	129	38	10.5
No. II.	17630	1146	234	14	7	18.5	7	7	9.5	1	47	17	14.8
No. III.	10508	1566	286	13	19	24.3	10	8	12.1	2	62	8	5.2
No. IV.	6595	875	175	13	7	22.8	2	4	6.8	1	50	3	3.4
No. V.	58466	2028	432	21	27	23.6	9	10	9.3	5	103	16	7.8
Totals	96333	9215	1872	135	117	27.3	65	58	13.3	26	103	82	8.9

BIRTH RATE.—The number of Births registered during the year was 252—135 males and 117 females. These figures give a birth rate equal to 27·3, which is the highest recorded during the last ten years and compares favourably with the general birth rate for England and Wales, although it is somewhat below the county average. The number of illegitimates is 10.

DEATH RATE.—123 deaths were registered giving a crude death rate of 13·3 per thousand which is somewhat higher than last year when it was only 11·9. The increase seems to have occurred chiefly in sub-districts Nos. 1 & 5. Nos. 2 & 4 were both lower and No. 3 exactly the same as last year. As regards sex 65 were males and 58 were females, 26 were under one year and 39 were 65 years and over. Heart disease was responsible for 21 deaths, Pneumonia, Bronchitis and other respiratory diseases for 14 and Phthisis and other Tubercular affections for 17. From Zymotic diseases there were only 9 deaths. The following table gives the comparison between Haltwhistle, Bellingham, Rothbury, the County of Northumberland, England and Wales on the matter of vital statistics.

	<i>Annual Rates per 1000 living.</i>		Infant Mortality. Annual Death Rate of Infants under 1 year per 1000 births.
	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Deaths from all causes.</i>	
Haltwhistle	27·3	13·3	103
England & Wales ..	27·2	15·2	128
Northumberland ..	30·4	15·01	133
Rothbury	27·5	13·0	74
Bellingham	23·0	16·0	140

The above rates for Haltwhistle, Rothbury, and Bellingham are for 1906. For England, Wales and Northumberland, for 1905. The statistics for 1906 are not yet published.

INFANT MORTALITY.—The rate of infant mortality although shewing a decrease from last year of 8 is still far too high at 103 per thousand births. The largest proportion of deaths under this heading has occurred in No. 1 sub-district the number being 17 and only

9 in all the other sub-districts combined—of the total of 26, 11 were due to premature birth and debility and in no case survived a week, several only living for a few hours. These cases may be classed as deaths arising from unavoidable causes but much yet remains to be done in removing such preventable causes, as insanitary domestic surroundings, bad habits and mode of life of parents, and above all improper feeding. With the aid of qualified district nurses and the influence which might be exerted through mothers meetings, it would seem not an impossibility to impress upon mothers of the working classes and others the great advantage of breast feeding compared with hand feeding. It has been conclusively proved that the mortality during the first year of life amongst breast fed infants is only about one-third that of hand-fed children. It is pretty well recognised that this heavy infantile mortality is due rather to ignorance than wilful neglect on the part of the mothers, and if by any means they could be educated in the proper manner of rearing their offspring during the first twelve months of their existence it would remove what is at present a blot on our social system.

ZYMOTIC DISEASES are accountable for 9 deaths only, viz: 5 from Diphtheria, 2 from Diarrhoea and 2 from Erysipelas. The rate per thousand is .98.

PHTHISIS is responsible for 11 deaths as compared with 8 last year and 11 in 1904. The rate per thousand is equal to 1.1. There has no doubt been a fairly steady decline in the mortality from this cause during recent years. This improvement may be ascribed in a great measure to the attention given to sanitation and the active steps now taken in endeavouring to spread a sound knowledge of the nature of the disease and the various methods of precaution which may be adopted to prevent or lessen the spread of infection. The general sanitary measures which tend to improve the health of the community and which are of importance in all infectious diseases, apply of course to Phthisis and the other forms of tuberculous disease, but these alone are insufficient. The ideal to be aimed at is to ensure that every individual suffering from Phthisis should be instructed in, and should carry out the measures necessary to make his particular case non-infectious. In order to accomplish this, notification either voluntary or compulsory is essential. Dis-infection of rooms in all cases of death from Phthisis has been carried out by the Inspector.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES notified number 82 as compared with 89 last year. The accompanying table shows the number of cases in each district and the period of the year at which they occurred.

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Scarlet Fever.</i>	<i>Diphtheria.</i>	<i>Erysipelas.</i>	<i>Enteric Fever.</i>
Jan.		8 in No. I 5 in No. V. 3 in No. I.	1 in No. V.	1 in No. I. 1 in No. V.
Feb.		1 in No. III. 2 in No. I.	1 in No. I.	
Mar.		1 in No. III.	1 in No. I.	2 in No. I.
April	2 in No. V.	1 in No. I.		
May		3 in No. I.	1 in No. I.	1 in No. V.
June		1 in No. III.	1 in No. I.	1 in No. I.
July		2 in No. V. 1 in No. I.		
Aug.		3 in No. V.		
Sept.		1 in No. I.		
Oct.	3 in No. I, 1 in No. II, 1 in No. 3	2 in No. I. 6 in No. II.	1 each in Nos. I, III, V.	
Nov.	1 in No. IV, 2 in No. I, 3 in No. II	3 in Nos. II & III 2 in No. I.		
Dec.	3 in No. II, 1 in No. I, 1 in No. IV.	1 in No. II. 1 in No. V.		
<i>Totals</i>	18	50	8	6

As will be seen from the table *Diphtheria* is responsible for 50, nearly two thirds of the cases notified and has prevailed more or less in all the sub-districts, except No. IV., which has remained free from infection throughout the year. The disease which was continued on from the last three months in 1905 was prevalent during the first three months of the present year, chiefly in sub-districts, Nos. 1, 5, and 3. Then followed six months in which only an odd case cropped up, still in sub-districts Nos. 1, 3 and 5. During Oct., Nov., and Dec. the greatest number of cases were reported from No. II District, although a few cases were also notified from sub-districts, Nos. 1, 3 & 5. There is no doubt that infection contracted during attendance at School is a more general cause of the spread of this disease than is at present recognised. The age incidence of the disease

is admittedly greatest between 3 years and 6. From that age to 8 there is a gradual decline ; and beyond 8 the incidence is relatively level. In epidemics of Diphtheria there are many mild cases in regular attendance at School and probably others coming from infected houses, but themselves presenting no symptoms. When Diphtheria prevails, parents cannot be too careful to keep the cavities of the mouth, nose and ears of their children thoroughly clean. Frequent rinsing and gargling with antiseptic should be practised. The success of the Autitoxin treatment is now so well established that in the case of the necessitous poor, it should be provided gratuitously.

SCARLET FEVER.—18 cases occurred : 7 in No. II sub-district ; 6 in No. I ; 2 each in Nos. IV, V, and 1 in No. III. Of the total of 18, 16 were notified during the last three months of the year. With regard to the spread of the disease, the same remarks apply as in the case of Diphtheria, Authorities however are now almost unanimous in the opinion that the late peeling of scarlet fever is not infectious. It is of more importance to note that there is no complication present, especially in the way of discharges from the ear or nose and that the throat is normal. Patients free in these respects and after a four weeks isolation may be bathed and on leaving the sick room should not return to it till it has been dis-infected. For this purpose the authority has provided the inspector with both a lamp and also a spray apparatus for use with formalin, a great improvement on the old methods previously employed. But what is of greater importance both in the interest of the patients and the public is that the former should be removed and isolated and for this purpose the provision of a well-equipped Hospital is a matter of urgent necessity of epidemics of Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever are to be nipped in the bud. I notice in the County Medical Officers report that the only rural districts in Northumberland not so provided are Haltwhistle, Bellingham, and Alnwick.

ERYSIPELAS. Only 8 cases were notified during the year, two of these proving fatal. All the cases were quite separate, occurred at varying periods of the year and no connection could be traced between any of them. This is a disease which is not now regarded by the medical profession as liable to be spread by personal contagion. I do not see that any practically good results follow from the disease being notified and if such notification were discontinued there would be a saving of the fees. Some steps are I believe being taken by the Stepney Borough Council and other authorities to remove Erysipelas from the list of notifiable diseases. Should this

be done its place might with advantage be given to Phthisis. Of the 6 cases of *Enteric Fever*, two at least were imported into the district and in no instance did the infection spread. No death occurred from this disease.

WATER SUPPLY.

IN No. 1 DISTRICT, this is ample in quantity and excellent in quality and is derived from Springs in No. V. sub-district, about 4 miles distant. It is delivered in mains, partly Earthenware Pipes until it reaches the town where it is distributed under pressure to some 700 houses. During 1905, a subsidence of the land (in consequence of Colliery workings) in which that portion of the line of mains consisting of Earthenware Pipes was laid took place. This was temporarily repaired, but in February 1906, the substitution of 175 yards of 7 inch Cast Iron Pipes in place of the damaged Earthenware Pipes was carried out under the superintendence of the Inspector. Since then two further breakages, due to similar causes, but of a lesser extent have occurred and the necessary repairs have been completed. There is every probability of further trouble at this portion of the Main taking place, and if the inconvenience of the frequent withdrawal of the Town's Supply is to be obviated (on account of these necessary repairs) this portion of the pipe track about 400 yards in length should be relaid with cast iron or steel tubes. The provision of a Reservoir capable of containing several days supply, situated somewhere on the rising ground of the Comb Hill is a duty which the Council should be prepared to carry out in the near future.

North Side Water Supply.—A provisional Scheme to supply the North Side (some 30 or 40 houses above the level of the present system) from the Cow Gap Springs has engaged the attention of the Council during the year, and Mr. Parker, C.E. is at present preparing detailed plans and estimates for this purpose.

NO. II SUB-DISTRICT.—MELKRIDGE SUPPLY. Negotiations between the Council and the owners of certain lands in this township have been carried on for some time with a view to increase the present supply but no agreement has been arrived at so far. The Melkridge Parish Council consider that under the conditions of the Melkridge Common Award they are entitled to the whole of the water from the Well-Bullers' Spring. A scheme for conveying this water to the village was prepared by Mr. Howitt and adopted by the Parish Council.

AT LONGBYRE IN No. III SUB-DISTRICT. I am sorry to say the inhabitants are still without a proper water supply. A Local Govt. Board inquiry was held during the year on a scheme with plans prepared by Mr. Howitt the Councils Inspector. The Board however refused to sanction a loan until plans by an engineer were submitted. Mr. Parker, C.E., has been instructed to act, and when his plans have been approved the work can be commenced and carried through without further interruption.

No. V. SUB-DISTRICT. The owners of a private supply at *Thorngrafton* have at length agreed under certain conditions to hand over to the Council the water tank and supply pipes belonging to them and the work necessary to put the supply in good order should be commenced at an early date.

SEWERAGE.

IN No. I. SUB-DISTRICT, the system of Water-borne Sewerage which has been in existence for many years, works very satisfactorily. At some points where the sewer has little fall, smells from the man-holes are complained of, but all cases where it can be arranged, Shaft Ventilators up the gable ends of adjoining houses have been erected. The flushing and general supervision of the system is under the care of the Sanitary Inspector. Under existing arrangements, he has on two days of the week the assistance of a Roadman for this and other sanitary work. If he had more continuous help the condition of the irrigation ground might be greatly improved and the quality of the effluent discharged into the river rendered purer. What is required, is the cutting of frequent cross channels from the main, running down the irrigation ground and getting into use portions of the land as yet untouched. By the provision of portable wooden channels also the Sewerage could be easily directed on to different parts of the surface at intervals of a few days, and by this means a more satisfactory effluent could be obtained.

IN No. II SUB-DISTRICT at MELKRIDGE, the question of providing a sewer for the village is in abeyance until the necessary arrangements for an increased water supply are completed.

No. III SUB-DISTRICT. At *Longbyre and Greenhead* several nuisances arising from defective drains have occurred during the year. These can only be satisfactorily remedied by the construction of proper sewers. At *Gilsland* the preliminary work for the installation of a sewerage scheme is progressing.

SCAVENGING.

In *Haltwhistle* No. I Sub-District. This is under the control of an official of the Council. The work however is let by contract and during the year the removal of house refuse has been carried out in a very unsatisfactory manner and complaints from householders were of frequent occurrence. It may not be altogether fair to blame the contractor employed as I am of opinion that satisfactory scavenging cannot now be accomplished by one man with a horse and cart. The number of houses in the township is now 745, and building operations are going on and likely to continue for some time, and the ash pits in the more modern properties are only of small capacity and require frequent emptying. In some of the older property in the town the large ash pits are occasionally allowed to remain without attention till they almost overflow. Then incomplete emptying probably takes place when the upper portion in the pit only is removed leaving behind an ever increasing mass of putrifying material always ready to play its part in disseminating disease. In so far as the influence and power of the Council can be exerted in progressively reducing the number of privy middens and inducing property owners to substitute Water Closets, it should be done. A new contractor has been recently appointed and it may be well to await the result of the change, before taking further steps. A new tip has been secured by the authority at the river side near the junction of the *Haltwhistle Burn* with the *Tyne*. It is about to be enclosed and will shortly be in use. Two private tips at *Tyne View* and near the *Saw Mill* are still used. The latter I referred to in my report last year as being unsuitable from its proximity to the flood water mark.

COWSHEDS AND DARIES. Speaking generally, the conditions affecting the Milk Supply of the district were fairly satisfactory. In addition to the usual defect from want of cleanliness and the routine Lime-washing, two cases of defective drainage were reported. In both instances notices were served on the owners and the matter is being kept before the Council. Instead of Lime-washing the lower portions of the walls of Cow-Byres, a coating of Tar and Paraffin mixed to the height of 4 or 5 feet from the ground would prove an inexpensive and efficient covering and could be washed down and kept clean at frequent intervals. In most cases owners of property and milk producers are willing to do what is possible to meet the requirements of the Authority, but there is still room for improvement. For instance, before milking the cows their udders might be washed and dried and also the quarters of the animals might be kept clean

In many instances caked dung and dirt were found covering these parts. There are no Milk Shops in the district, and it is not the custom to set up milk in tins and other vessels in a milk house, as after straining and cooling it is at once delivered out by cart or in cans to the different customers. I have no reason to suspect either adulteration or the addition of preservatives to milk, but it might be well that the Inspector should occasionally obtain samples with a view to ascertaining the presence or absence of such substances which are not only unnecessary but very objectionable on the ground of the public health.

FACTORIES and WORKSHOPS.

The first part of the Factory and Workshop Act which came into force January 1st, 1902 is the portion which mainly concerns Sanitary Authorities and Medical Officers of Health. This deals chiefly with the health and safety of the Employees when at work. The principal points to be noted are (1) The premises must be kept clean and free from any effluvia arising from Drains and Water Closets, or other nuisance. There must be no over-crowding and ventilation must be satisfactory. As regards over-crowding, each person must have 250 cubic feet of air space during ordinary working hours and not less than 400 during any period of over-time; (2) The temperature is to be secured and maintained reasonably and Thermometers are to be provided and kept in working order; (3) The Floors if liable to be wet in consequence of any process carried on are to be effectually drained; (4) All occupiers of such premises must twice a year (on or before Feb. 1st and Aug. 1st) provide for the Sanitary Authority a list of any home workers employed by them - a copy should also be retained by the Employer; Sanitary conveniences must be provided in proportion to the number of workers and there must be separate accommodation for persons of each sex; (5) An abstract of the act must be affixed in a prominent position and accessible to all the employees; (6) If more than 40 persons are employed adequate means of escape in case of fire must be provided. So far as this district is concerned, this latter can only apply to the South Tyne Brick Works. I have gone somewhat into detail in this matter as considerable misapprehension exists as to requirements of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901, and the obligations devolving on Sanitary Authorities and their Officers.

The number of Factories and Work-shops on the Register is 38. Frequent visits of inspection have been made both by the Inspector and myself, separately and conjointly. The following defects were found and reported on :-

(1)	Premises requiring lime-washing &c.	..	3
(2)	Premises without Sanitary Conveniences	..	1
(3)	Premises with defective Sanitary Conveniences		2
(4)	Premises without an abstract of the Act	..	6
(5)	Other defects	2
			14

Notices in all these instances were issued by the Inspector to have the defects remedied and they have all been promptly attended to.

There is only one instance of "Home Work" in the district and that is of a temporary nature as arrangements are being made for the worker, a Tailor, to be employed on the premises of the employer. The house occupied by the worker is clean and tidy and was free from any infectious disease at the date of visit.

WORK OF THE INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES.

The following tables indicate what has been accomplished by your Inspector during the year.

Legal proceedings were taken by the Council on two occasions in one instance for a breach of the building bye-laws and on the other for a contravention of the provisions of the Public Health (Water) Act, 1878. In both cases a conviction was obtained.

	No. in Register.	Visits made.
Factories and Workshops ..	38	46
Dairies & Cowsheds	21	30
Houses disinfected		58
Inspections of Drains		44
Inspection of buildings in course of erection		142
Total ..		320

NUISANCES.

Sub-District.	Defective and Insanitary Ashpits & Privies.	Defective and choked Drains.	Other Nuisances. Various.	Totals.
No. I.	72	26	32	130
No. II.	6	3	7	16
No. III.	25	10	8	43
No. IV.	3	4	2	9
No. V.	11	2	7	20
Totals..	117	45	56	218

In all the above instances, notice was given either verbally or by letter, and in cases requiring it by Statutory notice, and in nearly all the cases the nuisance complained of has been abated.

PLANS EXAMINED.

Sub-District.	Dwelling Houses approved.	Out buildings and other plans approved.	Certificate granted.	Total Plans.
No. I.	27	9	25	36
No. II.	4		4	4
No. III.		1		1
No. IV.		1		1
No. V.	3	4	3	7
Totals ..	34	15	32	49

IMPROVEMENTS.—A further extension by the County Council of the Channelling, Kerbing, and in some instances the relaying and leveling of the pavement has been carried out during the year. The making up also of several new streets and the proper channeling and kerbing of the same have been carried out by your Council under the superintendence of the Surveyor and a great improvement has been thereby effected at East View Terrace, Dale St., and Lorne St. A considerable number of new houses have been built and occupied during the year, especially in No. 1 Sub-District but still the demand is not satisfied and in consequence joint occupation of premises by two families is of frequent occurrence—which tends more or less to overcrowding.

REQUIREMENTS.—The list is still much the same as last year. The Council have been actively engaged in several of the defects existing in the district and reported on by me last year, but in a large number of instances no actual result has yet been accomplished. Several projects however are now ready or will very shortly be in a position to be carried out without further delay. Amongst these may be included, (1) The Longbyre Water Scheme ; (2) Water supply and sewerage for Gilsland ; (3) Ditto. for Melkridge (4) North Side Water Supply ; (5) Thorngraston Water Supply. The following are matters still requiring the attention of the Council, (1) A further utilization of the irrigation ground which should have more regular attention than it receives at present ; (2) The formation of the following New Streets—*a* Crossfield St. ; *b* Wydon Terrace ; *c* Scotsfield St. ; *d* Back Street behind Council Office ; *e* Back Street which is also the main approach to five Villa residences in Eden's Lawn , *f* the approach to several houses in Panthouse Field.

W. R. SPEIRS, M.B.,

Medical Officer Health.

January 29th, 1907.

